

BOOK NOTICES

LONARD, ROBERT I. 1993. **Guide to the Grasses of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas.** (ISBN 0-938738-08-9, pbk.) University of Texas-Pan American Press, Edinburg, TX 78539. Price not given. 240 pp.

The introduction to this guide to 63 genera and 183 species of grasses considers environment, how to use the book, morphology of grasses, and grasses as elements in vegetation. Following the key to genera are descriptions of these genera and keys to their species. The keys "worked" well for the 15 species I tried to key out; the descriptions are original and largely adequate. Closing the book are a glossary and illustrations of entire plants and/or diagnostic structures of about 100 grass species, four per page. These illustrations, appearing to be negative photos of line drawings, are of variable quality, some being useful aids, others less so. The index precedes the glossary and illustrations, a user-unfriendly innovation.—*John W. Thieret.*

BARBOUR, MICHAEL, BRUCE PAVLIK, FRANK DRYSDALE AND SUSAN LINDSTROM. 1993. **California's Changing Landscapes: Diversity and Conservation of California Vegetation.** (ISBN 0-943460-17-4, pbk). California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, CA 95814. \$24.95. 224 pp.

Gary Snyder, the wise California poet, in the preface notes the "elegance and economy" with which this important book makes California's "vast and complex landscape available to us." And that the book provides a "vision of a California whose native plant populations do not become entirely degraded, and whose grasslands and forests are sustainable." It is very significant that the authors address the landscape of vegetation and the natural dynamics that both sustain those landscapes and are perturbed by human influences. Because it is from that perspective, starting with understanding, that we can develop the management practices to protect, restore, and maintain native biodiversity. In this way the book is a model to lead other states, a role taken by the California Native Plant Society, publishers of this book, and several partner conservation organizations for several decades.

The book is readable and informative, for both lay and technical audiences. An introductory chapter describes the environmental forces that have shaped California's landscapes as well as the changes that have occurred since European settlement. The following chapters describe general regions, well illustrated with interesting maps, photos, and diagrams. Two closing chapters raise new and important topics: the first on past influences on the vegetation by Native Californians, previously thought to have lived for many millennia in California's lush vegetation without significant influence on its structure or function; the second on attempts and opportunities to restore degraded places, a goal that will become ever more important to achieve the very practical and reasonable vision encouraged by Gary Snyder.—*Larry Ford.*